Cyclophosphamide Treatment

(To be used in conjunction with the Shared Care Blood Test Monitoring Card)

Exceptional healthcare, personally delivered
What is Cyclophosphamide

Cyclophosphamide is a potent medication that has been used for many years to treat patients with specific kidney diseases. Although it was initially devised to treat cancer, Cyclophosphamide has been proven to be a very effective treatment of specific kidney diseases, particularly those which occur as a result of severe inflammation in the small blood vessels, known collectively as vasculitis. It is also used in the treatment of nephrotic syndrome which is a kidney condition causing heavy leakage of protein in urine.

Cyclophosphamide works by suppressing the abnormal immune responses with an aim to halt or possibly reverse the damage caused by the disease. During treatment with Cyclophosphamide your kidney specialist and your GP will closely monitor your progress. This leaflet provides basic information so that you are aware of the possible side effects and seek medical help to prevent any complication during treatment.

Before taking Cyclophosphamide

Before taking Cyclophosphamide make sure your doctor or pharmacist knows:

- If you are pregnant or breast-feeding.
- If you and your partner are trying for a baby or intend to have children in the future.
- If you suffer from liver problems.
- If you suffer from porphyria (a blood disorder).
- If you are suffering from cystitis (a water infection) or any other infection.
- If you have chronic lung disease and have repeated chest infections.
- If you are taking other medicines, including those available to buy without a prescription, herbal or
complementary medicines.

- If you have ever had an allergic reaction to this or any other medicine.

**How to take Cyclophosphamide Tablets**

- Before beginning treatment, read the manufacturer’s printed information leaflet.
- Take your medication exactly as directed by your healthcare specialist.
- Swallow the tablets whole with a full glass of water. Do not chew or crush them.
- Cyclophosphamide should be taken in the morning.
- These tablets are best taken an hour before a meal time, but they may be taken after a meal if necessary.
- Whilst taking Cyclophosphamide it is important to drink plenty of fluids (unless directed otherwise by your doctor), this will help prevent cystitis.
- Take Cyclophosphamide at the same time each day to avoid missing any doses.
- Cyclophosphamide can cause feelings of sickness. Your doctor may be able to give you an anti-sickness medicine to help.
- If you are sick shortly after taking a dose, or if you forget a dose, check with your doctor. You will be told whether to take the dose again, or wait until the next dose is due.
Having Cyclophosphamide Infusions

- You may be receiving injections of Cyclophosphamide which are given slowly as an infusion.
- The frequency of Cyclophosphamide infusions will be determined by your doctor.
- For each infusion you will be asked to come to the Renal Day Case Unit.
- Blood samples will be taken for tests at every visit as the doctors may change the dose depending on your blood counts and response to treatment.
- The infusion will be given over one hour and you will be monitored during and after the infusion.

Getting the most from your Cyclophosphamide treatment

- Keep your appointments with the kidney specialist so your progress can be monitored closely.
- You will need to have regular blood tests during your treatment with Cyclophosphamide.
- Your doctor will give you a blood test monitoring card for your GP to record your blood test results on.
- Important: You must not get pregnant or father a child while taking Cyclophosphamide as it can harm an unborn baby. Ask your doctor or pharmacist about suitable contraception.
- It is ok to have the seasonal flu vaccine during your treatment with Cyclophosphamide, but you should talk to your doctor before you have any other vaccinations, particularly live vaccines.
- Do not stop taking this medicine without speaking to your doctor first.
- If you find you are passing less urine than you would expect or your ankles swell, see your doctor as soon as possible. You may need to take another medicine to help with this.

Can Cyclophosphamide cause side effects?

Along with their useful effects all medicines can cause unwanted side effects. Although these usually improve as your body adjusts to Cyclophosphamide, some are more common than others.

The most common side effects are:

- Feeling or being sick – it may help to eat simple foods, little and often. Taking Cyclophosphamide with meals may also help. If this is troublesome, your doctor may give you an anti-sickness medicine.

- Headache - Ask your pharmacist to recommend a suitable pain-killer. If the headache continues, speak with your doctor

- Sore mouth – Try brushing your teeth with a soft toothbrush and use a mouth rinse frequently.

- Irritation of the bladder - Tell your doctor if you are suffering from painful or difficult urination, or blood in the urine following treatment.

- Hair loss - Your doctor will talk to you about this.
Other Important side Effects

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<th>Side effect</th>
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| Lowered Immunity          | Cyclophosphamide can affect your white blood cells hence your ability to fight against infections | You should contact your GP or the hospital straight away if you:  
  ▪ Have a fever (temperature above 38°C/100.4°F)  
  ▪ Suddenly feel unwell |
| Low blood counts          | Cyclophosphamide may reduce the production of red cells and platelets. It may also increase the risk of blood clots | You may feel more tired. This could be as a result of low red cell count causing anaemia. Inform your specialist or GP about these symptoms. You should contact your doctor straight away if you have:  
  ▪ Unexplained bruising or bleeding (for example nosebleeds, bleeding from gums or new blood spots)  
  ▪ Difficulty in breathing  
  ▪ Suddenly develop pain, redness or swelling in your leg |
| Changes in Blood Sugar Control | Cyclophosphamide can alter sugar metabolism in the body                             | It is advisable that diabetics should keep a close eye on their blood sugar levels. Please report any changes in your blood sugar levels to your GP. |
| Alternations in Liver functions | Cyclophosphamide may temporarily affect the way your liver works                    | This effect is usually temporary and is unlikely to cause you any harm. Doctors will monitor your liver functions at each blood test. |
NHS Constitution. Information on your rights and responsibilities. Available at www.nhs.uk/aboutnhs/constitution
If you or the individual you are caring for need support reading this leaflet please ask a member of staff for advice.

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